

gardens are making a comeback *HINT: Go to <http://www.loc.gov> and enter School Gardens with Constance Carter, selecting either or both of the first 2 entries.*

- ◆ Celebrate your environment in poetry and art. Encourage your students to participate in the **Rivers of Words Project.**

- ▲ Get the details: Each year, in affiliation with The Library of Congress Center for the Book, River of Words conducts a free international poetry and art contest for youth on the theme of *WATERSHEDS*. The contest is designed to help youth explore the natural and cultural history of the place where they live, and to express, through poetry and art, what they discover. The contest is open to any child in the world, from 5–19 years of age. Older students must have not yet completed high school. There is no charge to enter. <http://www.riverofwords.org/index.html>

- ▲ Watch the Rivers of Words 2008 Awards Ceremony Webcast http://www.loc.gov/today/cyberlc/feature_wdesc.php?rec=4456

Aldo Leopold, American ecologist, forester, environmentalist and writer was born in 1887 and is considered by many to have been the most influential conservation thinker of the 20th Century. His classic book – ***A Sand County Almanac*** (1949) – is a must read for anyone interested in saving our environment. As your students learn about its history and become environmental activists today, I hope they will become part of the community that Leopold envisions.

We abuse land because we regard it as a commodity belonging to us.

*When we see land as a community to which we belong,
we may begin to use it with love and respect.*

Aldo Leopold, ***A Sand County Almanac*** ▲

TECH TALK

Connecting with Wikis

As many of you know, wikis allow people to collaborate on a project for a short time or they can be a continuous place for group efforts. If you haven't explored creating one, get a site started now. Once you feel comfortable and somewhat proficient, you can begin inviting the appropriate people to join your team.

Wikis for You

For your first wiki, you might want one for the library media specialists in your district. You can have pages for posting lesson plans that can be tweaked and used by all. Have another for websites that everyone should know about. Particularly in districts where you don't meet regularly, this is an ideal way to share information and experiences. How about letting your colleagues know about a professional day you attended?

The *Front Page* can have important dates or be a place to post an urgent question. The message that the wiki has been changed will go out by email to all members. If they respond, it's easy to have a dialogue where you can keep track of the different comments and who made them.

For Your Teachers

A wiki is a great way to deal with the challenge of getting teachers to collaborate with you (and each other) as well as make some of them more comfortable with Web 2.0 tools. Think about a grade level or department with whom you have a good relationship, and consider designing a wiki for them. What kinds of resources might they want to share?

Since you will be an administrator on the wiki, you will receive messages when changes are made and to which page. Did a teacher create

a lesson plan that might work better if you were a part of it? This is your opportunity to suggest how it might be modified next time around with your contribution.

Once teachers become comfortable with working on a wiki, it will likely dawn on them they can use it with their classes. Do a brief workshop with those interested and get them started. Be sure to suggest that they might want to give parents *reader* rights, allowing them to see but not post. More and more, you want to use Web 2.0 tools to make parents aware of what is going on in the classroom.

Choosing the Software

One of the great things about wikis is you can get one going absolutely free. Several different companies offer the software which includes the template, tutorials, and basically all you need to get started and keep on going. You can find a comparison of 3 such engines at http://www.siteground.com/compare_best_wiki.htm.

In addition, in the School Begins 2006 issue, Doug Achterman suggested several wiki engines that are available. One, Peanut Butter wiki, www.pbwiki.com is frequently used by those in education. As soon as you sign up, you receive helpful emails from them as well as an invitation to be on a weekly live chat. However, you can just click on help and send your problem. Not only will you get a response within 24 hours, you will also receive a follow up email to check whether it answered your question.

You have some time now to play online. Choose your wiki engine and get going. Your colleagues—and your students—will reap the benefits. And you will be addressing both the *AASL Standards for 21st-Century Learners* and the National Educational Technology Standards for Students and Teachers. ▲



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